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ABSTRACT

The findings reported represent the major portion of an extensive statewide needs assessment of physical education for the handicapped in Virginia. Questionnaires were sent to school principals, physical educators, and special educators in 1,076 elementary, junior, and senior high schools. The survey revealed that the educable mentally retarded, learning disabled, and trainable mentally retarded account for most of the handicapped students participating in regular physical education. While school personnel feel that physical education is important for the well-being of the handicapped, appropriate physical education is not provided. Although most handicapped students participate in physical education, few have access to special physical education classes or an adapted physical education specialist. Facilities, equipment, and the size and training of the staff restrict the establishment of appropriate physical education for the handicapped. Most teachers but less than half of the principals believe funds should be increased to improve services for the handicapped. Few principals give a high priority to hiring an adapted physical education specialist. (Author/JD)

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The Preparation of Schools to Meet The Physical Education Requirements of P.L. 94-142

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Running head: Preparation of Schools for P.L. 94-142

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Abstract

Physical educators, principals, and special educators were surveyed to determine the extent to which schools are prepared to meet the physical education requirements of P.L. 94-142. The findings show that personnel providing physical education for the handicapped are inadequately prepared. Educable mentally retarded, learning disabled, and trainable mentally retarded account for the preponderance of handicapped students in regular physical education. School personnel consider physical education to be important to the well-being of the handicapped but appropriate physical education is not provided. The quality of physical education for the handicapped is far below that provided for the non-handicapped. Most handicapped students participate in physical education, but few have access to special physical education classes or an adapted physical education specialist. Facilities and equipment, and the size and training of the staff restrict the establishment of appropriate physical education for the handicapped. Most teachers but less than half of the principals believe funds should be increased to improve physical education of the handicapped. Few principals give a high priority to hiring an adapted physical education specialist.

The Preparation of Schools to Meet The Physical Education Requirements of P.L. 94-142

Most handicapped school children in the United States should be participating in physical education. This is mandated under P. L. 94-142, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, which requires that handicapped children and youth attending public schools must be provided with motor experiences that are integrated with those provided for the non-handicapped or are specially designed as prescribed in an individualized education program. The purpose of this article is to present the results of a study designed to determine how prepared schools are to fulfill the intent of this law. Specifically this study explores (a) the general characteristics and training of the personnel responsible for providing physical education for the handicapped, (b) the type of handicapped students enrolled in the school and in regular physical education classes, (c) the perceived importance and present quality of physical education for these students as seen by principals, physical educators and special educators, (d) current physical education practices and needs for the handicapped, (e) restrictions associated with providing appropriate physical education for the handicapped, and (f) questions about funding and hiring to meet the motor needs of the handicapped.

The findings reported here represent the major portion of an extensive state-wide needs assessment study of physical education for the handicapped in Virginia. Given the sampling techniques used and the implications of other studies (Ersing & Wheeler, 1971; Ersing, 1974; Johnson, 1975; Bird, 1975; Bird & Gansneder, 1979), it is quite reasonable

to suggest that these findings apply to other states. This study was supported in part by the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (H.E.W.) and the University of Virginia Bureau of Educational Research.

Procedures

Questionnaires were sent to samples of 480 Principals, 912 Physical Educators, and 912 Special Educators for a total of 2,304 persons drawn randomly statewide and across school levels in Virginia. One thousand and seventy-six schools were surveyed; 527 (49%) are elementary, 214 (20%) junior high, 251 (23%) senior high level, and 84 (8%) represent some other organizational pattern.

Principals were sampled evenly over large and small schools and school divisions. Sampling for physical educators and special educators were relative to the school and division size (i.e. more persons were sampled within larger schools and divisions than within smaller schools and divisions). Special educators were sampled by both school level and assignment codes (specialization). The returns from the special educators included persons with one or more of ten different specializations.

Results

The Respondents

Completed questionnaires were returned from 1061 educators for a return rate of 46%. Sixty-nine percent of the 317 principals who

returned the instrument are at the elementary level, 19% at the junior high level, and 12% at the senior high level. Thirty-seven percent of the 359 physical educators who returned the instrument are at the elementary level, 28% at the junior high level, and 35% at the senior high level. The returns for the 385 special educators are 32% from lower, 30% middle, and 38% upper grade levels. Return percentages in all instances conform to sampling percentages.

General characteristics. Fifty-six percent of the respondents are female and 40% are between the ages of 28 and 42 years. Ninety-seven percent have earned at least a Bachelor's degree, 49% a Master's degree, 3% an Educational Specialist degree, and 2% a Doctorate. The typical respondent had between 3 to 5 years teaching experience. As a group the principals are older, and more experienced, followed by physical educators and special educators. The principals have earned the highest degrees followed by the special educators and physical educators.

Forty-eight percent of the special educators work primarily with educable mentally retarded children. The other primary assignments of the special education teachers are with the trainable mentally retarded (20%), learning disabled, (17%), speech handicapped (6%), physically handicapped (5%), blind (2%), partially sighted (2%), and other (.4%). The total percentage exceeded 100% because some of the teachers reported more than one primary assignment.

Relevant training. Ten percent of the principals and 5% of the special educators have undergraduate or graduate majors or minors in

physical education. Only 12% of the physical educators and 10% of the special educators rate the quality of their training specific to providing physical education experiences for the handicapped as good to very good.

The physical educators and special educators were asked if additional training in adapted physical education would help them achieve their teaching objectives. Seventy-two percent of the physical educators and 61% of the special educators indicated that training of this type would be valuable to very valuable. Also, 59% of the physical educators and 48% of the special educators stated they were interested in purusing an advanced degree with a special emphasis in adapted physical education.

Type of Handicapped Students Enrolled

According to the principals, 10% of the student population in their schools is handicapped, and 50% of these are enrolled in special education classes. Fifty-seven percent of all handicapped students in the schools surveyed are enrolled in regular physical education classes. Table 1 gives the percentage by handicap condition of handicapped students in the school and of handicapped students in regular physical education classes. Total percentages exceed 100% because some of the handicapped students have more than one handicapping condition.

Insert Table 1 about here

EMR, LD and TMR students account for the major population of handicapped in the schools and in regular physical education classes.

Importance and Quality of Physical Education

Importance. Eighty-five percent of the physical educators, 80% of the special educators, and 75% of the principals rated physical education as an important to very important positive contributor to the development of the self image, self understanding, social adjustment, organic efficiency, sports skills, and present and future health status of handicapped students. Of the possible responses, development of sport skills was rated lowest in importance by each group. Yet important to very important ratings of this factor were given by 74% of the special educators, 67% of the physical educators, and 55% of the principals. The factors receiving the highest ratings of importance from all respondents were those dealing with self image and present and future health status.

Quality. When asked if appropriate physical education is being provided for handicapped students in their school only 17% of the physical educators, 30% of the special educators, and 36% of the principals responded yes to definitely yes. When the principals were asked to compare the general quality of physical education for the non-handicapped with that provided for the handicapped in their school 32% rated the quality of physical education for the handicapped as good to excellent while 71% rated the quality of physical education for the non-handicapped as good to excellent.

Current Practices in Providing Physical Education

Participation of handicapped students. The principals were asked to identify the activity of the typical handicapped student during his/her physical education time. Their responses show that 57% of these students usually or always participate in regular physical education classes, 42% participate in physical education as part of their special education class (half of these participate under the direction of a special educator and half under the direction of a physical educator), and 10% participate in special adapted physical education classes. Total percentages exceed 100% because some handicapped students participate in physical education in more than one class setting. Ninety-five percent of the principals reported that during their scheduled physical education time handicapped students never participate in non-physical education activities such as study hall, locker room duties, and/or office work.

Availability of special classes and teachers. All respondents were asked if special adapted physical education is offered as a specific class(es) in their school and if someone was performing the functions of an adapted physical education specialist in their school and/or at their district level. The expected general functions of an adapted physical education specialist were identified for the respondents (Guidelines, 1973).

Insert Table 2 about here

As shown in Table 2, few schools offer special physical education classes for the handicapped, and adapted physical education specialists are

generally not available at either the school or district levels. The discrepancies between groups in response to this question perhaps partly reflects perceptions from different vantage points. For example, the physical educators and principals may perceive special adapted physical education classes as those specially scheduled within the physical education department, and special educators may be interpretating the games, sports and exercise activity they direct as part of their special education classes as special adapted physical education.

Need for special teachers. All respondents rated their school and district level need for regular assistance from a specialist adapted physical education teacher. The teachers were asked to consider needs in relation to meeting their specific teaching objectives, and the principals were asked to consider needs in terms of meeting the overall educational objectives of the school. Sixty percent of the special educators, 47% of the physical educators, and 45% of the principals consider assistance from a specialist to be a need to great need in their school. Seventy percent of the physical educators, 68% of the special educators, and 51% of the principals believe this to be a need to great need in their district.

Responsibility for physical education. Fifty-six percent of the principals state that someone has the major responsibility to coordinate physical education for the handicapped students in their school. When asked to identify the person with this responsibility, 56% indicated it was a physical educator, 19% a special educator, 9% an adapted education specialist, 5% a teacher's aide, and 11% did not respond.

Identification and integration of the handicapped. As shown in Table 3 a variety of procedures are usually or always used by physical educators to identify handicapped students in their classes.

Insert Table 3 about here

To identify handicapped students in their classes ninety-five percent of the physical education teachers use at least one procedure and most use a combination of procedures incorporating mainly observation, referral, and review of student health documents. There appears, however, to be very little standardization of these procedures either within or across schools.

Only 40% of the physical educators, however, indicate they have planned curricular or administrative procedures to integrate handicapped students into their regular physical education classes after they have been identified.

Restrictions on Providing Physical Education

Table 4 presents the composite rank ordering of factors that respondents feel tend to restrict physical education for handicapped children in the schools and the percentage of each respondent group indicating the factor to be restrictive to very restrictive.

Insert Table 4 about here

The agreement across groups to the ranking presented in Table 4 is statistically significant, however, there are some notable deviations. Almost half of the physical educators and special educators indicate that the "training of the physical education staff" is restrictive to very restrictive, where only about one quarter of the principals feel this way. Approximately half of the physical educators consider "time in the schedule" as being restrictive to very restrictive, while only about one quarter of the principals and special educators are of this opinion. The special educators consider the "interest of the physical education staff" and "the school sense of responsibility" to be more restrictive than suggested by either the principals or physical educators. Aside from the "other", however, the interest and responsibility factors are ranked least restrictive by all three groups. The most restricting factors according to the physical educators is their time and training, according to the principals it is facilities, equipment and number of physical education teachers, and according to special educators it is the training and number of physical education teachers.

Funding and Hiring

All respondents were asked if in their opinion their school division should increase funds allocated to meeting the special physical education needs of handicapped students. Seventy-six percent of the special educators, 66% of the physical educators, and 43% of the principals responded yes to definitely yes.

The principals were also asked to consider all the needs of their school and district and to rate their priority for hiring an adapted physical education specialist at the school and district level within one, two and five years. At the school level 12% gave a high to very high priority to hiring an adapted specialist within one year, 22% within two years, and 30% within five years. Only about 30% of each respondent group ranked this as a high to very high priority at the district level within one, two, or five years.

Summary

This study shows that the great majority of the educators surveyed have not been adequately trained to provide motor experiences for handicapped students. Therefore, if the intent of P.L. 94-142 is to be met, public schools and institutions of higher learning must provide physical educators and special educators with inservice and preservice training in this area. Most respondents appear eager to pursue this training because they believe it will help them achieve their teaching objectives. About half of both the physical educators and the special educators indicated a strong interest in working towards advanced degrees in adapted physical education. Because mentally retarded children are by far the largest population of handicapped students in the schools, a major portion of the training emphasis should be directed towards working with these children.

The great majority of all the respondents believe physical education can make an important contribution to the psychological and social development

of the handicapped and that appropriate physical education is not beng provided for these students. When the principals were asked to rate the quality of physical education for the handicapped in their schools they rated it substantially below that provided for the nonhandicapped.

About half of the handicapped students in the schools are now participating in regular physical education classes, and this will no doubt increase under the impact of P.L. 94-142. The majority of handicapped students not enrolled in regular physical education participate in physical education as part of their special education classes. It is encouraging to find that handicapped students almost never participated in non-physical education activities during their regularly scheduled physical education time.

Very few schools surveyed now offer special adapted physical education class(es). Although segregation of the handicapped is discouraged under P.L. 94-142, it seems reasonable to project an increased demand for special adapted physical education classes because of the nature of regular physical education activities, the physical limitations of some students with various handicapping conditions, and the anticipated individualized programs.

To meet the requirements of P.L. 94-142 handicapped students must be identified and integrated into regular physical education classes or special programs must be prescribed. Virtually all physical educators in this study attempt to identify handicapped students in their classes by observation, referrals, and/or health document reviews. However, considering

their training, the adequacy of these attempts can be seriously questioned. Even when identified, less than half of the physical educators surveyed have curriculum and/or administrative procedures to help integrate handicapped students into their classes. This is perhaps a further reflection of inadequate training.

There are very few adapted physical education specialists employed in the schools surveyed. Considering the inadquate training of the teachers in this study and the special skills needed to provide, and often specially design physical education activities to accommodate many handicapping conditions, it is not surprising that the majority of the respondents indicated need for an adapted physical education specialist in their school or at least their district.

Inadequate facilities and equipment, and the size and training of the physical education staff tend to be the major restrictions to establishing appropriate physical education for the handicapped. Most teacher respondents see a need to great need for funds to overcome these and other restrictions. Most principals did not acknowledge this same level of funding need. Also the principals as a group did not place a very high priority on hiring an adapted physical educator within the next few years. Based upon the other responses of the principals, it is apparent that the principals responded more from a knowledge or the financial realities of the public schools and not in reaction to the desirability of appropriate physical education for the handicapped.

This study shows that schools are not prepared to fulfill the interest of PL 94-142. The school personnel surveyed in this study strongly acknowledge the importance of physical education for the handicapped. They are aware that the quality of physical education now available to the handicapped is below that offered to the nonhandicapped. Increase training and findings appears to be the key to improvement. The teachers want the training, but given the responses of the principals to questions related to funding, many schools will be slow in adequately meeting the physical education needs of the handicapped.

Table 1

Handicap Conditions of Handicapped Students in the School and of Handicapped Students in Regular Physical Education

Condition	School	Regular P.E. class
Educable mentally retarded	53%	44%
Learning disabled	26%	20%
Trainable mentally retarded	24%	10%
Speech handicapped	18%	12%
Physically handicapped	18%	6%
Hearing impaired	14%	11%
Emotionally disturbed	14%	9%
Partially sighted	10%	5%
Blind	3%	1%
Other	6%	3%

Table 2

Percent of Yes Responses to the Existance of Adapted Physical Education Classes, School Specialist, or District Specialist

Respondents	Classes offered	School specialist	District specialist
Physical educators	9%	13%	25%
Principals	12%	21%	39%
Special educators	20%	23%	26%

Table 3

Procedures Used by Physical Educators to Identify Handicapped Students in Their Class by Percentage of Respondents Who Usually or Always Use Procedure

Procedure	% Usually/Always
Observe when students enter class	71%
Referral from doctor	67%
Review cumulative health records	57%
Referral from parents	56%
Referral from school nurse	51%
Review medical exams	43%
Referral from principal	38%
Referral from non-physical education faculty	37%
Referral from agency	20%

Table 4

Composite Rank Ordering of Factors Restricting Physical Education for the Handicapped and Percent of Each Respondent Group Indicating the Factor to be Restrictive to Very Restrictive

Composite rank ordering of factors by all respondents	% Indicating factor restrictive to very restrictive		
	Physical educator	Principal	Special educator
1. Inadequate facilities & equipment	40%	35%	35%
2. Physical education staff lacks appropriate training	46%	28%	41%
3. Insufficient number of physical education teachers	44%	34%	39%
4. Insufficient number of handicapped students	37%	30%	22%
5. Insufficient time in schedule	52%	24%	30%
6. Lack of administrative support	18%	5%	24%
7. Physical education staff not interested	10%	4%	19%
8. Believe physical education of handicapped is not responsibility of school	11%	7%	20%
9. Other	2%	1%	5%

Reference Notes

1. American Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation. Guidelines for professional preparation programs for personnel for personnel involved in physical education and recreation for the handicapped, February 1973, 15-23.

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7. Johnson, R.E. Self-appraisal of graduate professional programs for the preparation of specialists in adapted physical education. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1975.

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